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Boudreau, Paul E**To:** Burger, David**Subject:** RE: DAS Graffy item in UK's The Guardian - "Journalists are painting an outdated picture of how the US treats detainees"**From:** Orlansky, Michael D**Sent:** Saturday, March 25, 2006 10:47 AM**To:** Milovanovic, Gillian A; Wohlers, Paul; Hubler, Stephen A**Cc:** Oakley, Carol V**Subject:** DAS Graffy item in UK's The Guardian - "Journalists are painting an outdated picture of how the US treats detainees"

FYI, EUR's DAS for Public Diplomacy Colleen Graffy had an op-ed type of piece in London's Guardian recently, commenting on detainee issues. EUR/PPD passed it to posts for possible use in connection with detainee questions that might arise.

Specific questions about Guantanamo have not been a major issue here. The questions are most often about what may or may not have taken place in Macedonia and about possible knowledge and involvement of Macedonian authorities.

Ms. Graffy spent many years in London working in international education programs before coming to State as a political appointee, and was recently in the UK for some PD programming.

Mike

Guantánamo is not a spa, but neither is it a torture camp

Journalists are painting an outdated picture of how the US treats detainees, says Colleen Graffy

Wednesday March 22, 2006

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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The Guardian

Victoria Brittain rose to defend the innocence of Moazzam Begg from her unbiased position as co-author of Begg's book, *Enemy Combatant* (Trial by Spin Machine, March 14). She laid out her case on how three different journalists in three different papers were wrong to question his innocence by attacking the integrity of the journalists. Those who wondered why, for example, Begg and his bookshop were under surveillance by MI5 before he went to Afghanistan are dismissed as "spin machines".

I came into her line of ire because I was allegedly in London on a "propaganda offensive". That is, unlike Brittain and the UN special rapporteurs, I had actually been to Guantánamo. But the "spin" on Guantánamo is so entrenched it is almost impossible to speak out contrary to the perceived wisdom.

Why, then, are we continually fed pictures of Camp X-Ray when it was a makeshift facility that existed for only four months more than four years ago? Why is every single detainee pictured on the BBC's website (and frequently on TV) shown in an orange jumpsuit and depicted in a stressful position, when most don't wear them and many live communally? More than 900 journalists have been to Guantánamo, yet the photos remain the same. Is it that detainees don't engage in recreation, in call to prayer five times a day, or in interrogations done over chess; or is it that those images don't fit the narrative that all seem to want to believe?

I came to London on a "detainee propaganda defensive". Before I went to Guantánamo, I had been on Radio 4's Today programme following the "interview" of current detainee Fawzi al-Odah. He described being internally fed "using a thicker

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tube with a metal edge". The "metal edge" is not exposed metal, as he would want us to believe, but the hospital standard, which is sheathed. It was for this reason that I brought a sample on to Jeremy Vine's Radio 2 programme. Far from Vine being "speechless", as Brittain describes, he said: "It looks like a piece of string."

Al-Odah complained of "lousy food", but the 4,200-calories daily rotating halal menu plan, adjusted during Ramadan, gives a fairer picture; Al-Odah claimed there were "no reading materials", whereas more than 1,800 books and other reading materials in 13 languages are available (including the popular Arabic versions of Agatha Christie and Harry Potter); Al-Odah refers to the "bad medical care", which must include the 45 eye exams per month, full range of immunisation shots, first-class dentistry and colon cancer screening for the over-50s.

Of equal importance to their treatment and living conditions are their habeas corpus rights. Most people are unaware that each detainee has had a combatant status review tribunal to challenge his designation as an enemy combatant as well as a yearly administrative review board, similar to a parole board.

Guantánamo is not a spa, but nor is it an inhumane torture camp. It is a prison - and, as prisons go, it is well run and humane. Before you join the "close it down" chorus, look past the spin to the facts.

Colleen Graffy is the United States' deputy assistant secretary of state for public diplomacy

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